

**Charter School Update January 2013—Cities with Highest Charter School Attendance:****How They're Really Performing**

*Evaluating student achievement in cities with highest percentage of charter school attendance in the U.S.*

*Results: Too many are failing to deliver achievement.*

**New Orleans, Louisiana 76%**

Today, 76% of kids in New Orleans attend charters. There were 66 operating charters in 2011-2012. Still, the Recovery School District in New Orleans received a grade of D. Despite lowering the graduation rate necessary for high schools to earn so-called "bonus" points, only 76.5% of these students graduated on time. Four charters in New Orleans will lose their charter at the end of the 2012-13 school year for non-performance. Best kept secret in New Orleans: the charter-to-charter takeover phenom. Charter takeovers are known to be tense affairs, with the failing school first protesting the decision, then blocking access to the premises, as well as records, that new operator need to function.

**Kansas City, Missouri 37% & St. Louis, Missouri 31% attend charter schools**

In November 2012, charter schools in St. Louis dove into the spotlight. Following years of financial trouble and management issues, six charters, operated by Imagine Schools, Inc., were closed. The closures cost the district at least \$250,000 and displaced thousands of students. The charters boasted 3,333 students — about 89% transferred to St. Louis Public Schools after years of academic and financial management issues. Not all of its charters are meeting state performance standards in Kansas City either. Last year, only five out of 21 charters in Kansas City met all of the performance standards.

**Albany, New York 26% attend charter schools**

About 2,800 students are enrolled in charters in Albany, New York where the "charter school shuffle" has become lively. In May 2012, officials announced Albany Preparatory Charter School will merge with another school. Officials say it's not a merger, but rather the closure of a weak school. More reshuffling will take place at yet a third school. Albany schools spokesman Ron Lesko said it was evidence the city's charter schools are not all living up to their promise. "It's no secret these failing schools are struggling," Lesko said. "This experiment with our city's children is failing in an extremely costly way for our families and students." Brighter Choice Foundation runs all of the city's 11 charter schools, which are privately run and publicly funded. Albany school officials estimate they will send \$35 million to charters for the 2012-13 school year.

**Gary, Indiana 31% attend charters**

In Gary, Indiana 22 public schools have had to close due to budget restraints and enrollment declines. Because of the switch to charter, more than \$4mm in state aid was lost. Yet, according to CBS News, "State test scores demonstrate the top performing K-6 school is a public school, McCullough, with 79.5% of the students passing. The top performing charter school, Gary Lighthouse, had only 48.4% passing. Then on January 22, 2013, Ball State University announced it had pulled its sponsorship of seven Indiana charter schools — including two in Gary — plagued by long-running academic woes. Bob Marra, Office of Charter Schools, said in a January 22, 2013, statement that an extensive review of 20 charters showed "current success or progress isn't sufficient." The university's contract with all seven of the schools ends June 30, 2013.

**Cleveland, Ohio 28% & Dayton, Ohio 26% students attend charters.**

Ohio charter students aren't doing much better in terms of student achievement than its public school students. According to Thomas B. Fordham Institute, by 6th grade, many Dayton students are well on the way to adult illiteracy with 39% of public school and 27% of charter students scoring "below proficient" and failing to pass 6th grade reading exams. Math test scores are even worse. About 15,900 children attend charter schools in Cleveland. When Ohio Department of Education released its school report card for 2011-2012, there was good and bad news. Thirty charter schools in Ohio rated Excellent; 55 received an Effective rating; while 55 charters are on Academic Watch and another 66 charters are Academic Emergency schools. Charter Good (85) vs. Charter Bad (121). Ohio passed its charter school bill in 1997.

### **Washington, D.C. 41% of students attend charters**

In the 2010-2011 school year, Washington, D.C. ranked dead last for graduation rates with less than 60% of students graduating. As the charter movement has taken hold in D.C., public school enrollment continues to shrink, falling 42% since 1996. With freedom to experiment, the success charters have enjoyed is a result of emphasizing proven strategies—longer school days, summer school, parent involvement, and a cohesive, disciplined culture. Surely Montana doesn't need charters to implement these proven strategies. D.C.'s latest challenge: the resultant increase in charter programs means charters are demanding equalized funding. Cost per student funding is sure to rise. Of note, Center City Charters, converted this year from seven Catholic schools, to cash in on public largesse. Still, according to *The Washington Post*, 123 traditional schools have shown more overall growth on standardized tests over the past six years.

### **Flint City, Michigan 33% & Detroit Michigan 41% attend charter schools**

Since charters came to Michigan in 1994, at least 50 have been closed. There are currently 276 charters operating there. In 2011, Michigan removed a 2005 cap on charters; by 2012, 31 new charters opened further destabilizing public school funding in Michigan. In November 2012, Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer said of its legislature's most recent attempt to stabilize school funding, "It's clearly the most fundamental dismantling of our public education that we've seen to date. It takes taxpayer dollars and hands it over to for-profit corporations to run our schools. It would create fiscal uncertainty for every single school in the state and only succeed in lining the pockets of the CEOs running for-profit corporate schools." Though some charter schools in Detroit are achieving, not all are performing as well as one might expect. For example, only 7.5% of middle schoolers at one charter in Detroit met or exceeded standards in math.

Finally, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers realized between 900 and 1300 of approximately 6,000 charter schools are performing in the lowest 15% of schools. According to a NACSA press release, "Too many schools are not achieving the goals promised in their charters."

Like many other states that have passed charter school legislation, these states are finding charters equal instability and diluted resources without notable gains in student achievement. The popular notion that choice and competition make public education better isn't proving true and there are unintended consequences: states are unable to predict their income or resource base as students shift back and forth and charters suck public monies out of public schools and then open and close with impunity.

*Stop Innovating & Start Educating*

Research provided by Tam Newby  
P.O. Box 775, Helena, MT 59624-0775  
503.806.4848 or [www.gps-schools.org](http://www.gps-schools.org)